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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - JANUARY 9, 2008

¶1. (U) PM TO PRESENT NEW GOVERNMENT ON JANUARY 12: PM Sanader has now signed coalition agreements with the Peasants Party (HSS), the Social Liberals (HSLs) and five minority representatives, giving him a 79-seat majority in the Sabor. He expects to conclude another agreement with the leading Serb party (SDSS) to add three additional seats by the end of the week. Discussions of ministerial positions are ongoing, sparking widespread media speculation regarding who will take which portfolio. A clear picture of the new cabinet may not emerge until Sanader presents his government to an extraordinary session of parliament on January 12. (TSelinger)

¶2. (U) NO REFERENDUM ON NATO: During coalition negotiations with PM Sanader, the HSS and HSLs agreed to give up pursuit of a NATO referendum. Commenting on the coalition agreement, HSS leader Josip Friscic explained that he called for a NATO plebiscite during the election campaign only in the case of widespread public opposition to membership, but Croatians now support NATO in public polls. Friscic also stressed that HSS has never opposed NATO membership but only wanted to ensure a climate of support among citizens. A poll released on January 8 showed 49 percent of citizens supporting membership while about 40 percent were opposed and 11 percent remained undecided. (TSelinger)

¶3. (U) US-SUPPORTED PILOT TASK FORCE BREAKS ORGANIZED CRIME RING: With long-term Post support and ICITAP guidance, Croatian prosecutors established a pilot regional task force to investigate and break-up a suspected trafficking ring. The innovative project brought together Serbian, Slovenian, and Montenegrin counterparts, and IOM (International Organization for Migration) along with the EU/Spain twinning advisor. After a year-long investigation by police and prosecutors, in December authorities arrested 25 persons in the four countries on charges including human trafficking, illegal smuggling of persons, illegal possession of firearms, and counterfeiting. Among the arrested include one individual wanted for murder from a notorious organized crime group. The project began with a successful investigation and trafficking conviction in Serbia, which provided testimony and evidence for further investigation. The task force intercepted a total of 105,000 telephone calls on 61 different phones that were being utilized by the group. Croatian police identified two trafficking victims and prevented the sale of one victim when they intercepted a call that involved negotiations for her sale. Post and ICITAP advocated for the employment of a task force structure, which is common practice in US law enforcement,

but a new concept to Croatian officials. As a result of the success of this operation and a related US-sponsored study visit of police and prosecutors, Croatian police are establishing a permanent fugitive-tracking task force. (KSelinger)

¶4. (U) INDICTEE GLAVAS TO REMAIN IN CUSTODY, FOR NOW:
Political-judicial wrangling over the detention of war crimes indictee Branimir Glavas has intensified in the run-up to the January 11 opening session of the new parliament. Glavas was re-elected to parliament during the November election and believes that a new term will restore his parliamentary immunity stripped during the last session to pave the way for his ongoing trial for crimes against Serb civilians in 1991. Legal experts are divided on the issue of whether the new parliament will have to remove his immunity again, and the presiding judge will undoubtedly be soon faced with the decision of whether Glavas' detention and trial can continue without additional parliamentary action. The Zagreb County Court denied his request for temporary release on January 8 to prepare for the opening of parliament but will rule again on Friday whether he may be released that day to actually attend the session (Croatian law allows for brief releases for "special events"). PM Sanader also weighed in earlier the same day, announcing that Glavas would in fact appear in Parliament. One daily attacked the PM's comment, calling it indirect pressure on the Court. (KSelinger)

WALKER